

Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached the “Department of Health and Human Services Pandemic Planning Update, A Report from Secretary Michael O. Leavitt,” which provides an excellent chronology of HHS pandemic preparedness activities to date and serves as a good primer on this topic. In particular, please note references to both FDA and CDC efforts in the “Monitoring and Surveillance” section of the document: “FDA is also providing scientific and regulatory assistance to diagnostic manufacturers to speed the development and deployment of new detection products . . . CDC is strengthening local laboratory capacity and capability, improving reporting systems and accelerating implementation of the national BioSense program, which collects real-time data from hospitals and other clinical-data sources.” LOCS will continue to update you as new information becomes available.

I am also including a link to a recent *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Recommendations and Reports* entitled “Influenza Vaccination of Health-Care Personnel Recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).” During the January 24, 2006, LOCS teleconference “What Clinical Laboratories Need to Know about Their Role in Influenza Testing,” a question was raised concerning inclusion of laboratory personnel in priority groups for influenza vaccination in the event of an available pandemic strain vaccine. It is important to note the definition of health care professionals (HCP) provided in this publication includes laboratory personnel. While these recommendations pertain to seasonal influenza vaccination and there is no guarantee the same policy would apply to a pandemic strain vaccine, we felt it important to reassure the laboratory community that laboratory professionals are considered priority targets for influenza vaccination in recognition of their potential for exposure to infectious materials.

For information and instructions on obtaining a free electronic subscription or a paid paper copy subscription to the *MMWR*, please visit http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/order.html?s_cid=mmwr_sub_e.

Regards,
Robert Martin, DrPH, Director
Division of Laboratory Systems